I. DISCOVERING YOUR PATH TO COLLEGE
Do you know what you want your future to look like?

Going to college is the best way to help ensure a bright and rewarding future. College gives you the freedom to discover your interests and develop skills that will connect you to a good job -- one that’s rewarding and makes you happy.

You may not have all the answers today—and that’s okay. Figuring out what you love and what you’re good at is a powerful way to shape your future.

This guide will provide you with tips and tools you can use to be sure you graduate high school prepared to succeed in the next stage of your life.

Let’s get started!
First things first: You deserve a college education. And you can do it.

You’ll have to work for it, but it’s worth it. College grads get the best jobs, are the least likely to be unemployed, and earn a whopping $23,868 more every year than people who only graduate high school.

Your path to college starts right now, by getting to know yourself better—so you can make smart decisions that will open doors for your future.

This section will help you connect the dots between what makes you happy, your strengths and gifts, your ideal path to college, and ultimately to your dream job and the future you want.
To achieve your dreams for tomorrow, you first need to understand who you are today.

High school is a great time to figure out what you’re interested in, build on your existing talents, and find new ones. When you start looking at yourself from different angles, you can discover new things about who you are now and who you want to be.

**HAVE YOU CONSIDERED:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who you are?</th>
<th>Who you want to be?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERESTS</td>
<td>INTERESTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes you feel truly alive?</td>
<td>What’s something you’ve always wanted to try?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILLS</td>
<td>SKILLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you really good at?</td>
<td>What talents do you want to develop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHERE YOU WANT TO GO</td>
<td>WHERE YOU WANT TO GO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes you happy?</td>
<td>What do you see in your ideal future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s go deeper

Use the worksheet on [page 10](#) to find out more about your interests and strengths. Clarifying them will help you set goals—both big and small—so you can reach higher in life.
An aspiration is a version of your future self that you want to achieve.

Where do you see yourself in the future? What do you want to know and be able to do? How can you build on your strengths while remaining open to discovering new things about yourself and your possible future?

By selecting classes and activities in high school that allow you to develop your strengths and explore new possibilities, you’ll get a better sense for what you want to study in college and the future you want for yourself.
FACT:

Setting specific, challenging goals helps you grow more, learn more, and achieve more.
UNDERSTAND

Connecting aspirations to a plan

An aspiration without a plan is just a fantasy.

You can begin to build a plan that gets you to college and leads you to the kind of career you want right now. A good plan won’t narrow your choices or close off possibilities—it will open them up.

To develop a plan, ask yourself:

What college majors and jobs align with my interests and skills?

Finding careers that connect to what you already enjoy doing will help you better select subjects to explore and possible college majors. Learn more in the resource section on page 9.

What will it take to reach my goal?

Each career requires a unique combination of education and skills. Some professions require a two-year technical degree, while others require a bachelor’s or even graduate degree.

Keep in mind: Aspirations are not fixed

You don’t have to know everything right now. College will give you many opportunities to expand and refine your aspirations.
## Understand myself and my aspirations to guide my learning and future career

### THE STEPS I WILL TAKE

1. Assess my strengths and interests
2. Try new things to expand my interests
3. Research college majors and careers that align with my aspirations
4. (Write my own)
Want to learn more?
These resources will help you get started.

**DISCOVER YOUR ASPIRATIONS**

**Inspiring stories**
Read this student’s perspective on connecting to passion and applying to college.

**Find your aspirations**
Use the tools created by InspirED to learn about and find your passions and purpose.

**Discover your future**
Answer these ten questions to begin learning about who you are and where you might want to go.

**CONNECT YOUR ASPIRATION TO CAREERS**

**Career paths**
XQ has partnered with Sokanu to help you learn about careers related to your interests—now and as they change over time.

**Career finder**
Explore career options based on your interests at Inside Jobs and learn what schools offer the classes to get you there.
**WORKSHEET: EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>How can I apply this to something interesting?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>How can I focus on this and become an expert?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>How can I challenge myself to improve this, and find ways to make this more interesting?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>How can I practice and get better at this?</th>
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</table>

**TOPICS**

- + MUSIC
- + ANIMALS
- + HEALTH
- + COMPUTERS
- + FASHION
- + POLITICS
- + SPORTS
- + NATURE
- + ART
- + MOVIES
- + SCIENCE
- + THEATRE
- + HISTORY
- + TRAVEL
- + LANGUAGES
- + TEACHING

**ADD YOUR OWN**

- +
- +

**DIRECTIONS**

This exercise will help you think through your interests and skills and how to work to get better based on where you are.

**STEP 1:** Look at the list of topics—if you want, add others.

**STEP 2:** As you read through the list, write topics in the four tables.

1. Box 1: You’re not interested yet, but you’re good at it
2. Box 2: You’re interested, and you’re good at it
3. Box 3: You’re not interested yet, and you’re not good at it yet
4. Box 4: You’re interested, but you’re not good at it yet

**STEP 3:** For each table, answer questions about the topics you listed.
Continue your journey, grow your knowledge.

Don’t forget to check out these other XQ College Pathfinder resources.

There’s more to come.
We will keep adding new tools and resources.

We’d love to hear from you!
What do you think of this guide? How can we make it better? Are there other resources you’re looking for? Please let us know!

Send Feedback